

## **Letter from Sherman to the Mayor and Council of Atlanta**

HDQRS. MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSISSIPPI,

*In the Field, Atlanta, Ga., September 12, 1864.*

JAMES M. CALHOUN, *Mayor*, E. E. RAWSON, and S. C. WELLS,

*Representing City Council of Atlanta:*

GENTLEMEN: I have your letter of the 11th, in the nature of a petition to revoke my orders removing all the inhabitants from Atlanta. I have read it carefully, and give full credit to your statements of the distress that will be occasioned by it, and yet shall not revoke my orders, simply because my orders are not designed to meet the humanities of the case, but to prepare for the future struggles in which millions of good people outside of Atlanta have a deep interest. We must have peace, not only at Atlanta but in all America. To secure this we must stop the war that now desolates our once happy and favored country. To stop war we must defeat the rebel armies that are arrayed against the laws and Constitution, which all must respect and obey.

To defeat these armies we must prepare the way to reach them in their recesses provided with the arms and instruments which enable us to accomplish our purpose. Now, I know the vindictive nature of our enemy, and that we may have many years of military operations from this quarter, and therefore deem it wise and prudent to prepare in time. The use of Atlanta for warlike purposes is inconsistent with its character as a home for families. There will be no manufactures, commerce, or agriculture here for the maintenance of families, and sooner or later want will compel the inhabitants to go. Why not go now, when all the arrangements are completed for the transfer, instead of waiting till the plunging shot of contending armies will renew the scenes of the past month?

Of course, I do not apprehend any such thing at this moment, but you do not suppose this army will be here until the war is over. I cannot discuss this subject with you fairly, because I cannot impart to you what I propose to do, but I assert that my military plans make it necessary for the inhabitants to go away, and I can only renew my offer of services to make their exodus in any direction as easy and comfortable as possible. You cannot qualify war in harsher terms than I will.

War is cruelty and you cannot refine it, and those who brought war into our country deserve all the curses and maledictions a people can pour out. I know I had no hand in making this war, and I know I will make more sacrifices to-day than any of you to secure peace. But you cannot have peace and a division of our country. If the United States submits to a division now it will not stop, but will go on until we reap the fate of Mexico, which is eternal war. The United States does

and must assert its authority wherever it once had power. If it relaxes one bit to pressure it is gone, and I know that such is the national feeling.

This feeling assumes various shapes, but always comes back to that of Union. Once admit the Union, once more acknowledge the authority of the National Government, and instead of devoting your houses and streets and roads to the dread uses of war, and this army become at once your protectors and supporters, shielding you from danger, let it come from what quarter it may. I know that a few individuals cannot resist a torrent of error and passion such as swept the South into rebellion, but you can part out so that we may know those who desire a government and those who insist on war and its desolation. You might as well appeal against the thunder-storm as against these terrible hardships of war. They are inevitable, and the only way the people of Atlanta can hope once more to live in peace and quiet at home is to stop the war, which can alone be done by admitting that it began in error and is perpetuated in pride.

I want peace, and believe it can now only be reached through union and war, and I will ever conduct war with a view to perfect an early success. But, my dear sirs, when that peace does come, you may call on me for anything. Then will I share with you the last cracker, and watch with you to shield your homes and families against danger from every quarter. Now you must go, and take with you the old and feeble, feed and nurse them and build for them in more quiet places proper habitations to shield them against the weather until the mad passions of men cool down and allow the Union and peace once more to settle over your old homes at Atlanta.

Yours, in haste,

**W. T. SHERMAN,**

*Major-General, Commanding.*

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## **All-Out**

<https://www.investors.com/news/management/leaders-and-success/william-sherman-ignored-his-critics-to-win/>

Sherman grasped that total war was a product of the coming industrial age, pitting societies and their productive capacities and morale against each other, said Daniel Fountain, a history professor at Meredith College in Raleigh, N.C.: "He believed his men could do what others, including President Lincoln, felt was impossible, which was to be cut off from supply lines and live off the resources of the South. After capturing Atlanta, he spent weeks studying census records to guide his path along lines where food would be most plentiful."

In November and December, Sherman conducted the March to the Sea. Wrote Castel: "The operation shredded what remained of the rail network connecting the Confederate heartland with Virginia and North Carolina."

On Dec. 22, 1864, Sherman occupied Savannah, Ga., and telegraphed Lincoln: "I beg to present you, as a Christmas gift, the city of Savannah, with 150 heavy guns and plenty of ammunition, and also about 25,000 bales of cotton."

Sherman's men moved north, destroying South Carolina in the same manner. When his opposite, Johnston, heard that the Union soldiers were speeding a dozen miles a day through swamps, he declared that "there had been no such army in existence since the days of Julius Caesar." Sherman captured the capital of Columbia in February 1865 and defeated the rebels at Bentonville, N.C., a month later, with the war ending in the spring.

Sherman's lesson is that when you face daunting challenges, do the unthinkable, namely step on it.

When Grant became president in 1869, he made Sherman commanding general of the Army.

Even his old enemies held him in high esteem. When Sherman died at age 71, Johnston was one of the pallbearers.